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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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Plan to Protect Bottlenose Dolphins from Entanglement in Commercial Fishing Gear Finalized

NOAA Fisheries Service Plans Informative Workshops

NOAA Fisheries Service finalized a plan to protect coastal bottlenose dolphins from becoming entangled in fishing gear along the east coast of the United States. The Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan (BDTRP) was published in the *Federal Register* (71 FR 24776) on April 26, 2006, and the regulations take effect 30 days later, on May 26, 2006.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act requires NOAA Fisheries Service to work with stakeholder-based take reduction teams to reduce marine mammal mortality in commercial fisheries.

"This is a process that has taken years of commitment from our stakeholders, and we rely on their expertise to help us develop effective plans," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service Director. "We are pleased we are able to put their recommendations into action through this rule and improve protection of bottlenose dolphins."

Finalization of this rule and conducting informative workshops for commercial fishermen enhances the sustainability of our nation's fisheries and supports the President's Ocean Action Plan.

The BDTRP contains both regulatory and non-regulatory management measures to meet the Marine Mammal Protection Act's requirements to reduce serious injury and mortality of bottlenose dolphins from commercial fisheries. The geographic scope of the BDTRP is from New Jersey through the east coast of Florida, and it affects nine fisheries:

- North Carolina Inshore Gillnet
- Southeast Atlantic Gillnet
- Southeastern U.S. Shark Gillnet
- Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet
- Mid-Atlantic Haul/Beach Seine
- North Carolina Long Haul Seine
- North Carolina Roe Mullet Stop Net
- Virginia Pound Net
- Atlantic Blue Crab Trap/Pot

— more —

The regulatory measures in the BDTRP apply to small, medium, and large mesh gillnets in marine waters and includes effort reduction, proximity requirements, and gear configuration or deployment modifications. Non-regulatory measures apply to all fisheries affected and include outreach and education measures, as well as measures to continue to improve research, monitoring, and stranding data.

To help ensure all fishermen affected by these measures fully understand the requirements, NOAA Fisheries Service is planning a series of eleven workshops from New Jersey to Florida. The setting for these workshops will be informal and open to the public. Agency representatives will present information on the final rule requirements and provide an opportunity for participants to ask clarifying questions about these requirements. Workshop dates and locations or a copy of the BDTRP can be obtained by calling NOAA Fisheries Service at 727-824-5312. A list of workshop dates can also be downloaded at:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/docs/BOTTLENOSE%20PLAN%20PAGE/BDTRP%20workshop%20page.pdf>.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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